



Understanding Final Orders

A final order is the judge's decision that ends your case. In a divorce, it is usually called the Final Judgment and Decree of Divorce. It sets out each party's rights and responsibilities going forward, so it is important to understand and follow it.

Key steps

- 1 Waiting Period.** In an uncontested divorce, Georgia requires at least 31 days after service before a final decree can be granted.
- 2 Entry of the Order.** The order generally takes effect once the judge signs it and it is filed with the clerk.
- 3 Keep a Copy.** Store the final order, along with any settlement agreement and parenting plan, in a safe place.
- 4 Transfer Assets.** Complete required steps, such as a QDRO to divide a retirement account or a deed to transfer real estate.
- 5 Update Records.** Update beneficiaries, insurance, and accounts. If the order restores a prior name, update your identification too.
- 6 Follow It Exactly.** Comply with every term, including payments, deadlines, and the parenting schedule (unless otherwise agreed by you and your coparent, this goes for the parenting schedule only. Child Support and other terms must be strictly complied with).

After the order is entered

Incorporated Terms. Any settlement agreement and parenting plan become part of the order and are enforceable.

Modifications. Changing custody or support later generally requires a new modification case and a change in circumstances.

Enforcement. If a party does not follow the order, the court can enforce it, including through contempt.

Appeals. Deadlines are short, generally 30 days, and many family law appeals require court permission first.

What to keep in mind

The order controls. Informal side agreements between the parties are generally not enforceable.

Property division is generally final and usually cannot be changed later.

Do not stop payments or change the schedule on your own, even if circumstances change.

Keep records of payments and parenting time in case questions come up later.

This guide provides general information about final orders in Georgia family law matters and is not legal advice about your specific case. Your attorney will explain how your final order applies to your situation.

YOUR ROLE

Read your final order carefully, complete each follow-up task by its deadline, keep records showing you have complied, and email us promptly if the other party is not following the order.

QUESTIONS?

As always, all questions and requests should be directed to the team via email to team@pepitone.law.